



# THE LIBERTY "BOYS OF '76"

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, February 4, 1901, by Frank Tousey.

No. 53.

NEW YORK, JANUARY 3, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

## THE LIBERTY BOYS' DANGER;

OR, FOES ON ALL SIDES.

By HARRY MOORE.



Attacked from both sides by Redcoats and Indians, Dick and Bob were in great danger. They paddled with all their might, however, and hoped for the best.



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## CHAPTER I.

### THE BOY DESPATCH-BEARERS.

Two handsome youths of about eighteen or nineteen years of age were riding along the road leading northward from Tarrytown, in the State of New York.

The youths were bronzed, and looked as if they had seen much exposure to wind and storm.

And such was indeed the case.

It was the beginning of the second week in July, of the year 1777.

The Revolutionary War was in full blast.

The two youths whom we have introduced to the reader's notice were famous for the wonderful work which they had done for the patriot cause.

Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook—the youths in question—were members of a band of youths who were known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

There were one hundred of the youths—a company, and they had done wonderful work.

Especially was this the case with Dick and Bob, who, in addition to their daring work on the field of battle, had made themselves famous as scouts, despatch carriers and spies.

Dick was the more famous, but Bob was a good second.

Where it was advisable for only one spy to be sent, Dick was usually the one selected, but when it was advisable for two to go, Bob was always the one chosen to accompany Dick.

The youths were on an important expedition when we introduce them to the reader.

General Washington, then down in New Jersey, had given Dick and Bob some important despatches to carry to General Schuyler, who was up near the southern extremity of Lake Champlain, doing his best to retard the advance of the British under General Burgoyne, who were coming down from the north, with eyes on Albany.

Dick and Bob had made good time since leaving Morristown, N. J., where the commander-in-chief of the patriot army had his headquarters at the time.

They had ridden almost constantly, stopping only to get a bite to eat and to let their horses eat and drink and rest a bit.

There was method in the youths' manner of doing their work.

They could not ride continuously from Morristown, away down in New Jersey, to the head of Lake Champlain, and they wished to make their stop—the first one of any consequence—at their homes.

And now they were almost home.

The parents of Dick and Bob owned farms which adjoined each other, at a distance of about two miles from Tarrytown.

The two houses were within less than a quarter of a mile from each other.

Dick's father was dead—had been killed by Tories a year before, but his mother and sister Edith were alive, and lived in the same old home.

Bob's parents were alive, and he had a sister, Alice, a couple of years younger than himself.

Alice Estabrook was Dick's sweetheart, and Edith was Bob's sweetheart—and when we have told this there is no need of explaining further why the youths had ridden so hard and continuously in order to get to remain at their homes for a while.

As the youths drew nearer and nearer to their homes their eyes brightened.

As the old familiar landmarks came into view the two became excited, and they urged their tired horses to a swifter pace.

"Say, the folks will be surprised to see us, Dick!" said Bob.

"Yes, indeed, Bob."

"That is, all of them excepting the girls," added Bob, with a grin.

Dick laughed.

"Don't you think they will be glad, Bob?" he asked.

The grin deepened.

"Do you?" was the counter query.

Dick laughed again.



"I hope so, Bob!" he said. "I know that I shall be glad to see them."

"Alice, you mean," corrected Bob, with a chuckle.

"Well, I guess it is Sister Edie that you are eager to see, old man!" retorted Dick.

Bob chuckled again.

"You are right, Dick; I wish to see her, most of all; but, of course, I shall be glad to see mother and father and Sister Alice. A fellow can't go entirely back on his own folks, even for his sweetheart."

"No, you are right, Bob. I am eager to see mother and Sister Edith. I am eager to see Alice, too, but the feeling is different regarding her—but in no way detracts from my desire to see my folks."

"That's right, Dick."

The two rode onward, chatting, and fifteen minutes later they came in sight of their homes.

As they did so a cry of horror escaped their lips, simultaneously.

## CHAPTER II.

### DICK AND BOB AT HOME.

"Our house is on fire!" cried Bob.

"Forward!" almost shouted Dick.

Bob had spoken truly.

The house nearest to them—which was Bob's house—was on fire.

In the yard could be seen a dozen men, and, strange to say, they were making no effort to put the fire out.

Indeed, as the youths drew near—they had lashed their horses into a run—they saw that several of the men were holding a man, who was making efforts to get free, evidently with the intention of trying to extinguish the fire.

"That is father the men are holding!" cried Bob, excitedly, his eyes shining with anger.

"They are Tories, Bob!" cried Dick.

"I believe you are right!" burst from the lips of Bob. "They have set fire to the house; and see, there are mother and Alice, weeping!"

"Forward!" was the only reply Dick made, but there was a dangerous gleam in the youth's eyes, and his lips were compressed in a manner which betokened trouble for the men who had caused trouble at Bob's home.

The attention of all in the yard was on the burning house, and none there saw the approaching youths.

They reached the yard fence and leaped to the ground

and were through the gate, and still no one had noticed their approach.

As the youths came through the gateway they caught sight of a stack of rifles which were leaning against the fence—had been placed there by the Tories, without doubt.

Dick and Bob were angry, but did not wish to slaughter anybody in cold blood.

They had pistols, but could not bring themselves to open fire on the Tories, whose backs were turned and who knew nothing of their danger.

The same thought struck both youths.

Leaping forward, each seized a rifle and catching hold of the barrels of the weapons the youths rushed toward the men holding Bob's father.

"Let go of my father, you scoundrels!" roared Bob, when he and Dick were almost upon the party, and he emphasized the words by dealing a Tory a blow on the head which stretched him on the ground, senseless.

"Scatter, you cowards!" roared Dick, and he, too, emphasized his words with blows from the butt of the rifle.

Yells of pain and terror escaped the lips of the Tories.

Cries of delight escaped the lips of Mrs. Estabrook and Alice.

"It is Bob and Dick!"

"It is Dick and Bob!"

Such were the words which were uttered by Mrs. Estabrook and her daughter.

Mr. Estabrook now succeeded in wrenching himself free from the hold of the men and he began striking right and left with his fists, to some purpose, as he knocked two or three of the Tories down.

Dick and Bob continued the attack with the clubbed rifles, and so terrible was their work with these dangerous weapons that the Tories were scattered with as much ease as if they were chaff.

Six or seven went down, with broken heads, and the rest took to their heels and ran for their lives, with the youths in close pursuit.

Dick and Bob followed only to the gate, however, their object being to prevent the men from securing their weapons.

This accomplished, they called to Mr. Estabrook to come and stand guard over the weapons.

"We'll put the fire out!" cried Dick. "It hasn't gained much headway yet."

Mr. Estabrook obeyed, and then Dick and Bob went to work to try to save the house.

They worked like Trojans, and Mrs. Estabrook and Alice assisted by drawing water up out of the well, and filling



buckets, while the youths carried the water and threw it on the flames.

It was hard work, and for a time the issue was in doubt; but after working like beavers for nearly half an hour the fire was extinguished.

The Tories who had been knocked senseless by Dick and Bob, had recovered their senses in the meantime and had struggled to their feet and gone staggering away.

Mr. Estabrook had let them go, as he thought they had received punishment enough, and he would not have known what to do with them if he had kept them.

The instant the fire was out Mrs. Estabrook and Alice rushed forward and the former seized Bob in her arms and hugged and kissed him.

And Alice? Under the excitement of the occasion, may she not be forgiven for doing practically the same way with Dick? Only she leaped into his arms instead of seizing him.

It was, after all, a happy meeting, now that the fire was extinguished, and the Tories had been put to flight.

Mr. Estabrook shook hands with the youths and told them that they had got there just in the nick of time.

This was a self-evident fact.

He told the story of how the Tories had appeared suddenly, and seized him, and set fire to the house, and how it would undoubtedly have burned down had the youths not arrived just when they did.

Just as he finished the story, Alice exclaimed:

"Here come your mother and sister, Dick!"

Sure enough, Mrs. Slater and Edith were approaching as fast as they could.

They had seen that friends had come to the aid of Mr. and Mrs. Estabrook and Alice, and were coming over to hear what all the trouble was about.

When they saw that the friends in question were Dick and Bob, they were wild with delight.

Mrs. Slater seized Dick in her arms and gave him a hug and kiss, and Bob, the irrepressible, seized blushing Edith and kissed her.

"Dick did the same with Alice!" he cried; "and I am not going to be left, if I can help myself."

All laughed at this, and then the conversation became general, and the youths explained how it was that they happened to arrive at such an opportune moment.

Then the women folks went into the house, while Dick and Bob and Mr. Estabrook led the horses to the stable, and unsaddled and unbridled them and gave them some feed.

Then the three went to the house and entered.

Mr. Estabrook said he could make the house as good as new by putting in a day's work on it.

It was decided that Mrs. Estabrook and Mrs. Slater should get up a big supper in honor of the home-coming of Dick and Bob, and that the supper should be held at the Estabrook home.

This having been settled upon, Mrs. Slater and Edith did not return to the Slater home; but Dick and Bob walked over and closed and fastened the doors, as it was not impossible that the Tories might again put in an appearance, and enter and do some damage, if they found the house unoccupied.

The youths enjoyed themselves hugely, that evening, and so did the rest of the folks—Edith and Alice especially.

After supper, which was a splendid feast to Dick and Bob, used for so long to coarse, army fare, and sometimes no fare at all, the youths and the girls went out for a walk.

They went down to the edge of the timber, back of the Estabrook home, where, on the bank of a little stream, under the trees, were a couple of benches.

Here Dick and Alice, and Bob and Edith sat and talked for two hours, though it did not seem that long to them.

Then they remembered that the older folks wished to enjoy the company of Dick and Bob, also, and they returned to the house.

All sat up a couple of hours longer and talked, and it was indeed a happy gathering.

It was eleven o'clock when Mrs. Slater and Dick and Edith went home; and as Dick paused just outside the door of the Estabrook home to talk a little while longer with Alice, it was necessary that Bob should escort Mrs. Slater and Edith—especially Edith—home.

Perhaps we ought not to tell it, but it was twelve o'clock when Dick and Bob met each other midway between the two houses, as they were making their way to their homes.

"Seems to me you are up rather late, Bob Estabrook!" said Dick, with mock sternness.

"Well, you aren't getting home any too early, yourself, Dick Slater!" retorted Bob.

Then both laughed, and, with a cheery "Good-night!" went on their way.

### CHAPTER III.

#### INDIANS.

Dick and Bob were up and away early next morning. They were youths who attended to business, strictly.



They had stopped over night with their folks, true, but they had earned the privilege by riding extremely hard and enduring fatigue that would have been too much for most men.

So they had bidden good-by to their parents and sweet-hearts, and had ridden away before daylight.

They had a ride of one hundred and fifty miles yet ahead of them, and this would take them close to three days, as much of the way led through a rough country.

The youths pursued their way steadily for two days and a half, and at the end of that time reached Fort Edward.

Here they were informed that General Schuyler was twenty to thirty miles to the northward, overseeing, in person, the work of obstructing the advance of Burgoyne and his army.

General Washington had said that it was important that the despatches which he had intrusted to the youths should be delivered at the earliest possible moment, and the youths paused only long enough to eat a bite and let their horses have an hour's rest.

Then they mounted and rode onward.

They were headed toward the north, and would find Schuyler, if such a thing were possible.

They were not altogether sure that it was possible.

The country in the vicinity of Skenesboro, where General Schuyler was supposed to be, was low and swampy, and it would be almost like looking for a needle in a haystack.

Still, the youths thought they would be equal to the task of finding the American general.

They rode all the afternoon, and finally, just as the sun was sinking behind the southern spurs of the Adirondacks, the youths came out upon the shore of a beautiful little lake.

It was about a mile wide, by two in length, and Dick and Bob could not think what lake it could be.

They had never heard of a lake of this size in that part of the country.

"It isn't Lake George," said Bob, "for Lake George is a long body of water."

"Yes," replied Dick; "and we are too far east for Lake George, I am sure. Well, it doesn't matter, anyway. We will camp here for the night."

The youths dismounted and unsaddled and unbridled their horses, and, after watering them, tethered the animals where the grass was thickest.

Then they got some bread and meat out of the saddlebags and proceeded to eat their supper.

It was almost dark by the time they had finished the meal, and they began to think of lying down and going

to sleep, so as to be able to get up early in the morning, when suddenly they heard a grating sound on the gravelly shore of the lake, near at hand.

They turned quickly and were enabled to make out a score of dusky forms leaping ashore from boats of some kind.

There was something about the stealthiness of the movements of the strangers, and the silence which attended upon everything they did that told the youths the character of the newcomers.

"Indians!" whispered Dick. "Come, we must get away from here quickly, if we don't want to lose our scalps!"

The youths thought it possible that the Indians had not yet discovered their presence, and, stooping, they started to steal stealthily away, hoping to escape observation.

As they did so a blood-curdling war-whoop went up from the Indians, and they came bounding up the sloping shore toward where the youths were.

"Run!" cried Dick. "We will have to run for our lives!"

He bounded away as he spoke.

Bob did likewise, and kept right alongside Dick.

They ran with all their might.

The timber grew almost down to the shore of the lake.

The youths were soon within the shelter of the timber.

The Indians were coming after them at the top of their speed, however.

They kept up a continuous whooping.

Doubtless they thought they would frighten the fugitives so that they would be unable to run at their best speed.

If so, they were making a sad mistake and wasting a great deal of wind that might have been of benefit to them in running, for the yells did not frighten the youths a particle.

It was not the first time they had heard Indian war-whoops.

Dick and Bob realized that they were in great danger, however.

The Redmen were the real children of the forest, and what they did not know about woodcraft was not worth knowing.

To outwit redcoats who knew little or nothing about woodcraft, in a contest of this kind, was one thing; to outwit the redskins in such a game was quite another thing.

The youths realized this.

They were determined to succeed, however, if such a thing were possible.



As they ran onward, through the timber, their minds were busy.

They were trying to think of some trick to play on their dusky pursuers.

Suddenly the youths fell headlong over a log which lay in their path.

It had grown so dark it was scarcely possible to see one's hand before one's face.

As Dick went down a thought struck him.

"Crawl up close against the log and lie perfectly still, Bob!" he whispered; "then, when the redskins go past us, we can leap up and run back to the lake."

"All right," was the reply.

The two crawled up close to the log and lay still.

Closer and closer came the redskins.

They were still whooping.

Closer and closer!

Their blood-thirsty yells were enough to curdle the blood in one's veins.

We will not say that Dick and Bob were utterly indifferent to the horrible sound.

They were not wooden youths, and one would have to be made of wood or iron to hear the yells of a score of Indians in the timber and darkness and not be somewhat impressed by it.

Closer and closer, and then the red demons were at hand.

Good as were the eyes of the redskins, two or three of them were caught the same as Dick and Bob had been and they shot headfirst over the log.

Guttural cries escaped the lips of those who had taken the tumble, and as they scrambled to their feet, Dick and Bob did the same.

They knew it would be safe, as the redskins would think they were some of their comrades in disaster.

The main body of the Indians had passed onward, and those who had fallen leaped onward in pursuit.

Dick and Bob leaped over the log and ran back in the direction from which they had just come.

They knew that the trick they had played would soon be discovered, but thought it possible that they might get back to their late encampment and have time to bridle and saddle their horses and mount and get away.

Back toward the lake they dashed at top speed.

They were not long in reaching the point where they had been in camp.

As they rushed up to the spot they suddenly became cognizant of the fact that there was somebody there.

Indeed, there were several persons there, and they were undoubtedly Indians.

This was made certain when wild war-whoops went up

from the throats of the dusky individuals on guard over the horses.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ON THE ISLAND.

The stars had come out so that it was possible to make out the forms of the Indians fairly well, and the youths saw that there were only five or six of them.

Quick as a flash the youths whipped out their pistols.

They knew that the whoops of this party of redskins would bring the main party back in a hurry, so it would do no harm to fire off their pistols.

They leveled the weapons, therefore, and fired without hesitation.

Again the Indians gave utterance to the thrilling war-whoops, and all of the redskins save one, who had been hit by a bullet and fell, leaped forward, tomahawks in hand.

Again the youths fired, having whipped out their other pistols, and then they darted down the slope toward the point where the redskins had disembarked.

The latter hurled their tomahawks at the fleeing youths.

The weapons whistled through the air and one or two of them came dangerously near the youths' heads.

A miss is as good as a mile, however, and the two ran with all their might and were soon at the water's edge.

Pushing the two canoes into the water the youths leaped in.

Seizing the paddles, they began paddling with all their might.

Dick and Bob were familiar with this sort of work.

They had once owned a birchbark canoe, and had become expert in handling it.

So they rapidly drew away from the shore.

They were fifteen or twenty yards away when the Indians reached the edge of the water.

Seeing that their anticipated prey was about to escape, the redskins gave utterance to whoops of rage and brought their bows and arrows into use.

They fired a flight of arrows, one or two of which passed through the frail sides of the boats.

Luckily the holes were made above the water-line, however, so there was no danger that the canoes would sink.

The Indians discharged another flight of arrows, but the fugitives were now out of range.

The arrows fell short.

The youths continued paddling with all their might, however.



They realized that the Indians would at once try to surround the little lake and thus make sure of capturing the white youths who had so audaciously made off with the canoes.

"Let's head straight across to the other side," said Dick; "I think it will be to our advantage to get off the lake as quickly as possible."

"All right, Dick," replied Bob; "I think so, too."

So they headed straight across the lake.

They had almost reached the opposite shore when they saw forms running along the shore.

"Stop!" said Dick, quickly; "there are some more of the red fiends, Bob! We can't land here."

The youths paused, and turning the heads of the canoes up the lake, paddled in this direction.

They thought that it might be possible for them to get to the end of the lake ahead of the Indians and get ashore and away in safety.

As they paddled along, however, they heard whoops from a number of points along the shore, and their hearts sank.

"I'm afraid we are in for it, Dick," said Bob.

"It begins to look that way," agreed Dick.

"Do you suppose these are the Indians who are with Burgoyne's army?"

"I suppose so, Bob."

"Then there are a sufficient number of them so that they will be able to surround the lake and make it impossible for us to get ashore?"

"I fear so. I understand that there are nearly two thousand Indians with Burgoyne."

"Jove! then we are surely in for it, Dick!"

"Yes, two thousand Indians is a good many."

"True; and the British army must be near at hand, also."

"Quite likely."

"What shall we do, Dick?"

"We will keep on trying to make a landing, Bob."

"And if we can't make a landing, then what?"

"We will have to be governed by circumstances."

They paddled onward.

Suddenly Bob said:

"What is that over on our left, Dick?"

"Oh, I know what that is, Bob," was the reply; "you remember, we noticed that there was a small island in the middle of the lake."

"That's so; I had forgotten it. That is the island."

"Yes, and if we can't make a landing on the mainland, somewhere, we will return to the island, Bob."

"That's a good idea; the Indians will probably run us

down there, sooner or later, but it will enable us to put the end off farther, at any rate."

"So it will."

The youths continued paddling, and made several attempts at landing, only to be foiled each time.

There were Indians everywhere, and the two considered that they were fortunate in discovering the presence of the redskins in time to save themselves from landing and being captured.

"There is no use trying any further, Bob," said Dick, finally; "we can't get ashore, and might as well head for the island."

"All right."

The youths turned the heads of the canoes toward the island.

It did not take them long to reach the island.

They approached it carefully, for they did not know but there might be some Indians on it.

They heard nothing of any, however, and landed in safety.

They leaped ashore and pulled the canoes up out of the water.

The canoes, being made of birchbark, were light and easy to handle.

"Now what shall we do?" asked Bob.

"We will explore the island," replied Dick; "perhaps we may be able to find a hiding place somewhere upon it."

"I wish that we might," said Bob, dubiously; "but I am afraid that we will not be able to do so."

Dick was afraid so, too, but he told Bob to come along and they would find out.

They made their way inland and traversed the island from one side to the other.

It was not a large island, being, the youths judged, not to exceed two hundred yards across at the widest point.

It was considerably higher at the centre than elsewhere.

Having ascertained the extent of the island, the youths made their way back to where they had left the canoes.

Just as they reached the spot they heard the steady dip, dip of paddles.

The Indians were coming!

## CHAPTER V.

TREED.

What should they do?

This was the question which presented itself.



It was one which would have to be answered at once, too.

It could not be put off to some other time.

It demanded immediate attention.

The youths listened intently.

They could hear the dip, dip in a number of different places, which proved that there were a number of canoes.

Of course, there was little doubt that each canoe was filled with Indians.

Dick's first idea had been that they would enter the canoes and try to slip away and get past the approaching canoes, but after listening a few moments he gave up this idea as being impracticable.

There were too many of the approaching canoes.

Then, too, the Indians had splendid eyesight, and would be certain to see the youths if they tried to escape in the manner Dick had contemplated.

"Come!" whispered Dick.

He led the way along the shore of the island, Bob following closely.

They made their way halfway around the island, and as far as they went they heard the sound of paddling.

The Indians were approaching the island from all directions.

"I don't see much chance for us, Bob," whispered Dick; "come, let's go back into the woods a ways. We'll make it as difficult for the redskins to find us as possible."

They made their way up through the timber and were soon at about the centre of the island.

They paused and stood leaning against a mammoth tree.

They could hear the voices of the Indians as they called out to one another.

"What shall we do?" asked Bob, who always deferred to Dick's judgment.

"I hardly know what to do, Bob," was the sober reply; "I can see no chance for us to escape. We have done extremely well to put our capture off as long as we have."

"Let's climb a tree, Dick."

Dick thought this not a bad idea.

"Very well," he said; "this one is too large, however."

They hunted around and found a tree which they could reach around, and they at once climbed it.

This was not a difficult matter for the youths, for both were old hands at this kind of work.

They were soon thirty feet from the ground.

At this point they found a large limb extended across from the large tree they had been leaning against.

"Let's cross to the big tree, Dick," whispered Bob.

"All right."

They did so.

It was not a difficult feat, as the limb was as large as

a man's leg at the point where it touched the tree they had climbed.

They had just succeeded in getting across when they heard the Indians underneath them.

The Indians were talking excitedly.

It was evident that they were puzzled by the disappearance of the youths.

That they had found the two canoes where Dick and Bob had left them, there was no doubt, so they must know that the fugitives were on the island.

It did not take the astute redmen of the forest long to figure out the puzzle, however.

They were too well versed in woodcraft not to know what the youths would likely do.

The most probable thing was that the fugitives would climb a tree.

So the redskins decided, and they did exactly what Dick and Bob thought they would do—set guards every five yards or so around the edge of the island so that the white youths could not get away.

Then the rest built a large bonfire near the middle of the island and squatted around it in a picturesque manner.

It happened that the fire was at the foot of a tree only a little ways distant from the one Dick and Bob were perched in.

The blaze did not make it light so high up as where the youths were, however, so they were not alarmed.

Still, the thought of having to remain in the tree all night was anything but pleasant.

They sat there and gazed down upon the redskins, and wondered how it would end.

It did not seem possible that they should be able to escape.

Still they did not give up all hope.

Something might turn up which would aid them in getting away from their enemies.

The youths waited as patiently as possible, and at last the Indians rolled themselves in their blankets and went to sleep—or, at least, they became motionless.

Still the youths remained quiet.

They were afraid some of the redskins might be awake.

They had decided to try to get down out of the tree and away, but wished to make sure that the Indians were sound asleep before making the attempt.

Even then it would be an extremely hazardous proceeding.

Dick and Bob waited one hour, two hours.

The fire had now died away till it was only a faint, sputtering mass of embers.



Dick decided that if they were to make the attempt to escape, now was as good a time as any.

He so informed Bob, in a whisper.

Bob announced his readiness to make the attempt.

The youths at once began making their way across to the tree they had climbed in the first place.

Dick was in the lead.

Bob was close behind.

Slowly and cautiously they crawled along the limb.

The Indians slumbered on—or, at least, they seemed to do so.

The youths reached the tree, and then, after waiting a few moments, Dick began the descent, Bob still keeping close behind.

They wished to reach the ground as nearly at the same time as was possible, so that if they were discovered they could both make a break for liberty.

Naturally the youths made their way down the side of the tree opposite from that on which were the Indians.

Their bodies were thus sheltered, only their arms being visible on the side next the redskins.

Just as Dick's feet touched the ground one of the Indians opened his eyes.

His face was toward the tree down which the youths had just come.

The redskin saw the youths' arms hugging the tree, and he instantly understood.

He leaped to his feet, giving vent as he did so to a shrill war-whoop.

## CHAPTER VI.

### IN THE WATER.

As the war-whoop sounded upon the night air, Dick let go his hold on the tree and bounded away through the timber, calling to Bob to follow.

Bob let go all hold and dropped to the ground like a shot.

Luckily he did not fall, and whirling, he darted after Dick.

The wild yell of the Indian brought his fellow-braves to their feet instantly.

The next instant all were bounding through the timber in pursuit of the fugitives.

"We will have to fight our way through the fiends at the edge of the lake, and take to the water, Bob!" said Dick. "We must not allow ourselves to be captured."

"Not if we can help it, Dick. I'm for taking to the water."

Onward the two dashed.

After them came the Indians, yelling like demons.

Their war-whoops were heard by the sentinels along the shore of the lake, and the redskins there were on their guard.

Dick and Bob knew this would be the case.

They did not hesitate, however.

As they drew near the edge of the lake they drew their pistols—one in either hand.

They would thus have four shots between them, and hoped to so rattle the redskins as to be enabled to get through the line and into the water.

A few moments later Dick and Bob dashed out from among the trees.

There was no moon, but the stars were shining brightly, and the youths could see the outlines of the Indians.

Right in front of them were four or five dark forms.

The youths dashed straight toward these, and as they drew near they fired two shots.

Crack! Crack!

A wild yell went up from the redskins, and one gave utterance to what sounded like a death-cry.

Again the youths fired.

Crack! Crack!

Another wild war-whoop went up, and then the youths were right among the redskins, striking out, right and left.

They had quickly reversed the pistols, and, holding them by the muzzles, were using the weapons as clubs.

Used thus, the heavy pistols were effective weapons.

Two of the Indians were knocked down, and then thrusting the pistols in their belts the youths plunged headfirst into the lake.

At this instant the band of redskins came dashing out of the timber and down to the shore.

They quickly learned what had become of the fugitives, and then there was a scrambling into canoes in hot haste.

A few moments later and a dozen canoes were shooting hither and thither, the occupants watching eagerly for some sign of the two white youths.

The Indians did not know it, of course, but they were dealing with two youths even more cunning than themselves.

Dick and Bob were expert swimmers, and they had decided that their only chance to escape lay in playing a trick upon their enemies.

The instant they were in the water, Dick and Bob swam out into the lake with all possible speed.

They went only fifteen or twenty yards, however, when they paused.



They were now so far away from the shore as to be out of the Indians' sight.

The youths could tell by the sound, however, that the Indians were getting into the canoes and pushing off to come in pursuit.

Where the youths were the water was up to their necks.

As they stood there, only their heads were above the surface.

Dick and Bob waited till the canoes were perhaps half-way to them, and then sank down out of sight.

Indeed, they sat down upon the bottom of the lake and maintained their position there by holding to a rock.

They remained in this position till after the canoes had passed over them, and then they again rose to their feet and stuck their heads out of the water and drew in a fresh supply of air.

The canoes were just gliding out of sight, lakeward.

The youths did not dare try to reach the shore, however, for there were Indians there.

Indeed, the youths hardly knew what to do.

The only thing, so far as they could see, that they could do was to remain where they were and be ready to dodge under water at the approach of a canoe.

They did this.

Two or three times canoes came so near as to make the youths in danger of being discovered, and each time they drew in long breaths and sank under the water, out of sight.

They remained under, each time, as long as they could hold their breath, and then again stuck their heads up out of the water like huge turtles.

They remained where they were for nearly half an hour, and by this time they became satisfied that the canoes had all returned to the shore of the island.

The youths could hear the guttural voices of the Indians as they talked excitedly on the shore, and they shrewdly suspected that the redskins had become convinced that the white youths had drowned in the waters of the lake.

Indeed, many of the Indians did think this.

There were some, however, who did not think so.

They were the older and shrewder ones, and they held to the belief that in some manner the white youths had escaped.

Some of these thought the youths had slipped back to the island, while others thought they had gone across to the mainland.

As there were many more Indians on the mainland, however, they were certain the youths would be captured.

It was lucky that it was warm weather.

Had it been otherwise the youths would have become badly chilled.

They remained there for more than an hour, and then as things quieted down on the island the youths began to think of trying to make their escape from their unpleasant position.

But what should they do?

That was the question.

Dick thought it possible that they might get to the shore and get one of the canoes.

If they could do this without being discovered, and could get in the canoe and away, they might be able to find some place on the mainland where they could land without being seen by the Indians.

Dick and Bob talked the matter over in whispers, and decided, finally, to make the attempt.

As soon as they had made the decision, Dick and Bob moved forward.

They moved slowly and cautiously.

It would not do to make any noise.

The Indians were wonderfully keen of hearing.

The least splash of the water would be heard, and then all would be up.

Forward, foot by foot, stole the youths.

As the water grew more shallow they bent forward so as to keep their bodies as much under the water as possible; and when this was no longer possible, owing to the shallowness, they kept their bodies down as near the surface as possible.

As they drew near the shore they saw a row of canoes which were drawn up on the shore.

Beyond, standing like a statue, they saw an Indian brave.

The youths sheltered themselves behind one of the canoes.

They were careful to select one as far away from the Indian guard as possible.

When they were in position, they waited for some time.

They wondered if it would be possible to draw the canoe out into the water without it being seen by the Indian on guard.

They doubted it.

Still what else could they do than make the trial?

It seemed as if there was nothing else to do unless they remained where they were till morning.

And if they were to do this they would be discovered when daylight came.

So they might as well make the attempt, even though they were discovered, for they might succeed.

If they failed they could again take refuge under the water, in the same fashion as before.



Or they might leap into the canoe and make a sudden dash and try to escape to the mainland.

The youths took hold of the gunwale of the boat, at the stern, and began pulling at it.

They pulled it a distance of less than an inch each time.

They well knew that the keen-eyed redskin would quickly detect the fact that the canoe was moving, if they pulled it very far at a single attempt.

On the other hand, if he noticed that the canoe had moved slightly, he might attribute it to the motion of the water.

As the youths worked they kept their eyes almost constantly on the stalwart figure of the Indian guard.

They had worked away there for half an hour and had drawn the canoe down a distance of a foot or more.

Then, suddenly, as they looked they saw the Indian turn and look toward the interior of the island.

Perhaps he had heard some sound behind him which had attracted his attention.

It did not matter, he had taken his attention away from the point where Dick and Bob were, and they instantly took advantage of it.

"Pull!" whispered Dick.

And Bob pulled.

In fact, both pulled together, and the canoe slid off the sand and into the water, with scarcely any noise.

The youths moved out into the lake as rapidly as they dared, drawing the canoe after them.

When out where the water came to their waists the youths climbed into the canoe and seized the paddles.

At this instant a wild war-whoop burst upon the night air.

## CHAPTER VII.

### IN THE RAVINE.

"The guard has discovered that the canoe is missing!" said Bob, in a low voice.

"Yes; pull, Bob!" was Dick's reply.

The youths plied the paddles with all their might.

They could hear sounds of excitement, in the way of yelling and running about, on the island.

The Indians were hastening to embark to come in pursuit.

Dick and Bob were determined to get clear away from the island, this time.

They would make a landing on the mainland, if such a thing were possible.

There were too many of the red demons on the island to make it a safe haven of refuge.

They had had one experience at trying to land on the mainland, true, but they hoped for better luck next time.

They headed the canoe as nearly toward the north as they could, and paddled with all their might.

The youths were expert at this sort of work, and did not fear that they would be overtaken by the pursuing Indians.

The danger they would have to encounter lay on the mainland.

They kept at work and hoped for the best.

Soon they were near the shore.

They kept right on going.

They must land.

Dick thought of their empty and wet pistols, and wished that the weapons were dry and loaded.

Then he and his comrade would not have felt so helpless.

Onward they moved.

Closer and closer to the shore they drew.

The Indians in the canoes behind the fugitives were yelling at a great rate, so there was not much chance that those on the mainland would be in ignorance of the coming of the fugitives.

Still Dick and Bob did not hesitate.

They were determined to land, this time, and fight their way through the Indians, who stood in their way—or try to do so, at any rate.

As they drew near the shore they were agreeably surprised to not hear any sounds of the Indians.

This encouraged the youths, and they paddled with renewed energy.

Closer and closer to the shore they drew, and presently the bow of the canoe touched the shore.

Still there was no sound to indicate the presence of any of the redmen of the forest.

The youths leaped out and stepped ashore.

Just as they did so they heard a crashing sound in the timber.

They heard the patter of feet on the leaves, also.

The Indians were coming!

"Come!" said Dick, in a low, cautious voice; "follow me!"

He darted away through the timber, Bob keeping close at his comrade's heels.

Promptly as they had acted, however, the Indians had discovered that the white youths were near at hand.

A few moments later they were in full pursuit.

The chase was an exciting one.



Dick and Bob were now desperate and ran at the top of their speed.

They felt that now was their chance to escape if it were possible that they might do so at all.

Their wet clothes stuck to their limbs and impeded their flight somewhat, but the youths made good speed, nevertheless.

They felt that they were running for their lives, so why should they not make good speed?

Onward they dashed.

Through the underbrush they crashed.

They collided with trees and in several instances were knocked down by the impact, but they were up again and running at full speed in an instant.

After them came the Indians, whooping and yelling like fiends.

Onward, recklessly, the youths dashed.

They had no idea where they were going.

The country was new to them.

They knew nothing whatever regarding the lay of the land.

All they thought of was to try to escape from the red demons who were pursuing them so fiercely.

Suddenly the ground seemed to give way beneath Dick's feet.

Downward he shot, a distance of twenty feet, at least, so Dick judged.

Had the youth not alighted in the bushy top of a fallen tree he would doubtless have been killed.

As it was, he was not injured.

After Dick came Bob.

Downward he plunged, heels over head, the same as Dick had done.

Like Dick, he alighted in the treetop which eased his fall sufficiently so that he was not injured.

The youths hastily scrambled out from among the branches of the tree.

"Quick!" cried Dick; "we must get away from here! Follow me!"

Dick leaped forward, but came to a stop almost immediately.

He had run against an almost perpendicular wall of earth.

Dick reached upward, but could not reach the top.

He realized his and Bob's situation.

They had fallen into a deep and narrow gully.

They could not go onward in the direction they had been going.

They would have to go to the right or the left, up or down the gully.

Dick turned to the right and ran down the gully.

Bob kept close behind him.

They had gone but a short distance when they heard the Indians at the top of the gully.

The fact that none of the Indians plunged downward, proved that they knew of the existence of the ravine.

Of course, the Indians did not know which way the youths had gone, so some ran along the edge of the gully in one direction, and some in the other.

A number remained on the spot, for they did not know but that the fugitives had been killed or at least knocked senseless by the fall down into the gully.

Dick and Bob heard the pattering of feet along the edge of the ravine at a little distance behind them, and knew what it meant.

They kept on running, however.

They thought it possible that they might be able to, in some manner, escape.

They were youths who did not know the meaning of the word "despair."

They would never give up as long as there was the least chance for them to do anything for themselves.

Onward the youths ran.

The ravine did not extend in a straight course.

It bent gradually around toward the right.

The youths kept on running till they had gone about three-quarters of a mile, Dick judged.

Then they came to a sudden stop.

The youths came very near uttering exclamations.

They saw a sight which surprised them.

Straight ahead and about one hundred yards distant a camp-fire was blazing.

Beyond the fire the youths saw what seemed to be a goodly sized body of water.

They thought they understood the matter.

The ravine which they had been following had bent around in a semi-circle and the youths were now almost back to the lake from which they had so recently escaped.

Seated around the camp-fire were a number of Indians.

The youths were in a trap.

They did not dare advance.

Neither did they dare turn back, for they might encounter Indians coming in pursuit of them.

Still other Indians were coming along the right bank of the gully.

About the only chance for the youths seemed to be in climbing up the left bank of the ravine.

They decided to try this.

They did so, but could not succeed in getting up.

The bank was too steep.



Then, too, the wall was made up of loose earth which crumbled away underneath their feet, making it impossible for them to ascend.

They heard the Indians moving along the top of the opposite bank and stood perfectly still till their enemies were quite a distance away.

They will enter the ravine and come up this way in search of us, Bob," said Dick. "What shall we do?"

"I don't know, Dick. We seem to be in a trap."

"It looks that way. Well, let's turn back and keep trying to find a place where we can climb out. We may be able to go back quite a distance before encountering the Indians who went in the other direction."

"So we may. Well, you lead the way."

"I know a better plan, Bob; you take one side and I'll take the other and we will both keep trying to find a place where we can climb out."

"That's a good idea, Dick."

"Let's be moving, then; you take the left and I'll take the right."

The youths turned and moved back along the ravine in the direction from which they had just come.

Dick, on the right hand, and Bob on the left, kept searching for a point where it would be possible to scale the wall of the ravine and get out.

Of course, their progress was slow compared to what it had been before.

They fully realized that they did not have much time to spare, however, and made all the haste possible.

They had gone perhaps a quarter of a mile when they heard voices behind them.

"They are coming behind us, Dick," said Bob.

At this instant voices were heard from in front, also.

"Yes, they are coming from both front and rear, Bob," was Dick's reply; "it looks as if we are in a trap from which there is no escape."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### FOES ON ALL SIDES.

Still the brave youths would not give up.

They were determined to keep on looking for a place where they could get out of the ravine up to the very last.

They hastened their work now.

Suddenly a low exclamation of excitement and delight escaped Dick.

"This way, Bob!" he said, cautiously; "we can get out here, I am sure."

Bob hastened across the ravine to where Dick was.

Dick was already several feet up the embankment.

"Come on, Bob," he said, "follow me."

The voices of the redskins could be plainly heard, now.

The Indians were close at hand.

The youths worked with desperate energy, but were careful to make as little noise as possible.

It was a hard climb, but finally Dick reached the top of the ravine wall.

The Indians were now close at hand.

Dick lay down flat upon his face, and, reaching down, seized hold of Bob and aided him to climb.

Just as Bob reached the top of the embankment the two parties of Indians met in the gully at a point almost immediately under the youths.

As Bob reached the top he accidentally detached a large clot of dirt and it went rolling down into the ravine.

It was an unfortunate happening.

Bob could not have proclaimed the presence of himself and Dick more effectively if he had yelled at the top of his voice.

Cries of excitement escaped the lips of the Indians.

They understood that their intended prey had succeeded in climbing the wall of the ravine.

If the white youths had done this they could do it.

They at once began making the attempt.

That the Indians would succeed, Dick and Bob did not have the least doubt, and they realized that the best thing they could do would be to get away from there as quickly as possible.

Turning their backs to the ravine they hastened away.

They ran onward as rapidly as possible.

They made good speed, and as one, two, three minutes passed and still they heard no sounds of pursuit, they began to breathe more freely.

Were they going to escape from the redskins at last?

They hoped so.

They felt that they had earned their freedom.

They realized that they had been very lucky.

Surrounded by at least hundreds of Indians, it was, indeed, a wonder that they had escaped capture.

The youths hastened onward at top speed for perhaps fifteen or twenty minutes longer.

Then they paused and listened.

Away in the distance they heard the whoops of their red foes.

They continued onward five minutes longer.

Then they paused again and listened.



They could not hear a sound to indicate the presence of a foe anywhere in the neighborhood.

"By Jove! I believe we have escaped from the red fiends, Dick!" said Bob, in a low, cautious tone.

"It would seem so, Bob; we will have to be very careful, though, for we are liable to run into another gang of the red scoundrels at any moment; they are certainly thick around here."

"I should say they are thick! Entirely too thick to suit me. What shall we do now, Dick?"

"I hardly know, Bob. One thing, I hate to leave this neighborhood until after we have made an attempt to get our horses again. We won't be able to get around in very good shape without them, Bob."

"That's so, Dick; we must have our horses if such a thing is possible."

"We certainly must make a try for them, anyhow, Bob."

"Well, you go ahead, Dick, and I'll follow. I'm ready to do whatever you think best."

"All right; come along."

Dick and Bob made their way slowly and cautiously through the timber.

It was quite dark, so they had to go entirely by guess.

Dick was headed, as nearly as he could judge, in the direction of the place where their horses had been tethered that evening when they first went into camp, before the Indians had put in an apparance.

Of course, the Indians might have taken the horses away, but the youths had to take their chances on this.

After half an hour's walk through the timber and darkness, the youths were forced to come to a stop on account of reaching a swamp.

It was so muddy that they sank in nearly to their shoe-tops at every step.

They retraced their footsteps till they came to dry ground.

Here they paused and held a council.

They decided that, everything considered, the best thing they could do would be to go into camp for the night.

Having so decided they promptly put their plan into execution.

They had no blankets and their clothes were yet still far from being dry, but the youths were so accustomed to exposure and hardships that they did not give the matter of personal discomfort a thought.

They raked up some leaves, and throwing themselves down at the foot of a huge tree, were soon asleep.

They slept the sleep of exhaustion.

Certainly they had gone through with enough since nightfall to exhaust any one.

They slept soundly till daybreak and awoke somewhat refreshed.

They were hungry, however, and the worst of it was that they did not know where they were going to get anything to eat.

They were not the youths to remain idle, however, or to bemoan their fate.

Hungry or not hungry, they would be up and doing.

They at once set out.

Dick was sure he knew the way, now that it was daylight, and he took the lead.

It did not take him long to find, however, that he was mistaken.

He came to the conclusion that he did not know the way.

"I'll climb a tree, Bob, and see if I can see the lake," Dick said, finally.

"All right, Dick," replied Bob, and he threw himself down at the foot of a tree while his companion climbed another which stood close at hand.

Dick was soon down again.

"The lake is over in this direction," he said, pointing. "Come along."

Bob leaped up and followed, and the two made their way in the direction Dick had indicated.

Fifteen minutes' walk brought the youths to the shore of the lake.

Before emerging from the timber, Dick and Bob took an observation.

Seeing nothing of their enemies, they decided that the coast was clear.

The only suspicious thing they could see was a canoe which rested half on the shore and half in the water, in a little cove near the mouth of which they stood.

The youths hesitated a moment, but as they wished to get a good look up and down the shore of the lake, they decided to venture out into the open ground.

They stepped forth from among the trees and walked toward the shore of the lake.

Dick and Bob had almost reached the point where the canoe lay when they were made to realize that in venturing out of the timber they had made a mistake.

A party of redcoats suddenly came running over a ridge at the left-hand side of the cove; at the same time a party of Indians rushed out from among the trees on the right of the youths and fifty yards distant.

Dick and Bob realized that there was only one chance for them.

They could not get back to the friendly shelter of the timber, and their only chance for escape seemed to lie in taking to the water.



This would be extremely dangerous, but Dick and Bob were accustomed to danger.

The thought of danger to themselves would never deter them.

As the redcoats came running over the ridge, and the Indians dashed forth from the timber, giving utterance to war-whoops that were almost enough to curdle the blood in one's veins, Dick and Bob acted.

They leaped forward and pushed the canoe into the water.

They were in the canoe at a single bound, and each seized a paddle.

They began paddling for dear life.

They knew that their chances for escaping were very slim.

The redcoats were rapidly approaching from one side, and the Indians from the other.

By the time the youths were halfway out of the little cove, both redcoats and Indians were close enough so that bullets and arrows would easily reach the fugitives.

The Indians were the first to open hostilities.

They sent a flight of arrows, two of which penetrated the side of the canoe.

Luckily, neither of the youths were hit.

One Indian, a regular giant in stature, hurled a large stone which struck the water within a foot of the canoe.

Had it struck inside the canoe the bottom would have been knocked out as if it had been pasteboard, and the youths' flight would have been brought to an abrupt termination.

The redcoats now opened fire.

Attacked from both sides, by redcoats and Indians, Dick and Bob were in great danger.

They paddled with all their might, however, and hoped for the best.

Swish!

Another flight of arrows went hurtling through the air.

Crash! Roar!

The redcoats had fired another volley.

Bob was grazed by a bullet, while Dick was touched by both a bullet and an arrow.

The wounds, however, were so trivial as to amount to nothing.

Indeed, in the excitement of the moment the youths did not feel the wounds at all.

They continued to paddle vigorously.

The fact that the youths were able to sit erect and continue paddling, after two such volleys as had been poured upon them, filled the spectators with wonder.

Surely the youths must bear charmed lives, they thought.

The redcoats gave utterance to a yell of anger and disgust at their failure to stop the youths, while blood-curdling war-whoops went up from the lips of the Indians.

Both parties prepared to fire another volley.

The youths, who were watching affairs as closely as possible, saw the redcoats level their pistols, and the Indians fit fresh arrows to the bowstrings, and realized what was coming.

"They are going to give us another volley, Dick," said Bob, grimly; "do you think we will be able to pull through another such ordeal, alive?"

"I don't know, Bob; all we can do is to keep on paddling, grit our teeth and hope and pray that we may come through alive."

Swish!

The arrows whistled through the air.

Crash! Roar!

The bullets from the redcoats' pistols sped in the direction of the two brave "Liberty Boys."

To the amazement of the redcoats and Indians the fugitives remained sitting erect and continued paddling, vigorously.

The youths had each received another wound, but, as before, the wounds were slight ones, not sufficient to disable them.

Dick and Bob, themselves, were surprised.

They had hardly dared hope that they would escape death as a result of a second volley from the redcoats and Indians.

They had done so, however, and finding that they were not even seriously wounded, their spirits rose.

They were now out of the cove and upon the lake proper, and a few more strokes of the paddles would carry them out of range of the missiles from the weapons of their enemies.

The youths paddled with redoubled vigor, and feeling sure now that they would be out of range before their enemies could fire a third volley, Dick and Bob gave utterance to a shout of defiance.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A NARROW ESCAPE.

Certainly the youths' good luck was in the ascendant.

Although the arrows and bullets whistled past the two, in showers, neither was more than slightly wounded.



This angered the redcoats and Indians, and they fired a third volley, anyway.

As Dick and Bob had expected, the bullets and arrows fell short.

Again the youths gave utterance to a shout of defiance.

Wild yells of rage came back from their enemies.

But words hurt no one, and the youths could afford to laugh at the yells of anger.

Still Dick and Bob realized that they were not yet out of danger.

There were other canoes on the lake.

The youths had had ample proof of this fact only the night before.

Doubtless a hundred of the redcoats and Indians would be after them very soon.

Looking back, the youths saw the Indians and redcoats running along the shore of the lake.

"They are going to the canoes," said Dick; "they will be after us in a hurry, now."

This proved to be correct.

Two minutes later a dozen canoes, filled with Indians and redcoats, put out from the shore and headed in the direction of the canoe the youths were in.

"They are coming, Dick!" said Bob, grimly, after a backward glance.

"All right; let them come," replied Dick. "I think we can give them a good race."

This was true.

Dick and Bob were both experts with the paddle, and they did not weigh the canoe down very greatly, while the redcoats and Indians had piled into the canoes in such numbers as to make the frail crafts sink deep in the water, and, of course, propulsion was more difficult under such circumstances.

The youths headed past the island.

They kept their eyes open, here, for they feared there would be more enemies who would put out from the island with the intention of heading them off.

Such did not prove to be the case, however.

The redskins seemed to have all left the island.

The youths rounded the island and struck out for the shore at the west side of the lake.

As they drew near the shore they kept a sharp lookout for the Indians.

Far down the shore they could see a band of redskins coming.

They were some who had been participants in the attack which had been made on Dick and Bob when they took to the canoe, and they were trying to get around the edge of the lake in time to head the youths off.

The two did not think their enemies could do this, but they feared there were others awaiting their coming on the shore.

"Well, we will have to take our chances, Bob," said Dick.

"Yes," was the reply; "we can't stay on the water, and might as well land at once and take our chances on escaping."

They headed straight in toward the shore.

Nearer and nearer they drew.

They were almost there now.

The pursuing canoes were nearly a quarter of a mile behind.

The youths did not apprehend danger from the occupants of the canoes.

Danger, if danger there was, lay on the mainland.

They set their teeth, however, and headed straight in. They watched closely.

They could see nothing of any enemies.

Still this did not make them feel easy.

They well understood the cunning tactics of the redmen of the forest.

They would remain hidden in the woods till their intended victims should land, and then would rush forward.

However, the youths did not hesitate.

They paddled with all their might.

Nearer and nearer the shore they drew.

Presently the bow of the canoe grated on the sand.

This was the signal for the youths to leap ashore.

They did so, and, without pausing an instant, darted away, going diagonally down the shore in the opposite direction from that from which the Indians were coming.

As they did so a score of hideously painted redskins rushed out from among the trees at a point a hundred yards back of the youths, and, with wild war-whoops, came running forward, flourishing tomahawks and war-clubs!

## CHAPTER X.

### IN THE PATRIOT ENCAMPMENT.

The youths were not yet out of danger.

Indeed, they were in great danger.

They might escape from the oncoming Indians, but it would be by the hardest kind of running if they did so.

They were determined to try it, at any rate.

They were stout-hearted youths.

Nothing ever daunted them.



They had long ago learned to accept everything as a matter of course, and do the best they could under any and all circumstances.

So now they bounded away with the speed of the wind.

A fresh chorus of war-whoops went up from the Indians as they saw this action on the part of the youths.

There was a note of derision in the yelling.

It was evident that the redskins thought the white youths could not escape.

They did not know Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook, however.

It was never safe to take anything for granted where those two were concerned.

In the first place, there were very few Indians who could run as fast as Dick and Bob, or who had as much endurance.

The youths were always in training, and were tough and hardy.

So in a contest where speed and endurance were to play much of a part, the two were sure to give a good account of themselves.

If they could reach the shelter of the timber before the Indians got within range, they would be all right, they were sure.

If the Indians should get close enough so that they could shoot arrows with effect, then one or both the fugitives might be killed or wounded, and it would all be over with them.

So in order to keep the redskins from getting within range the youths headed almost straight down the shore, simply edging slightly in toward the timber.

The Indians were no doubt surprised when they found that they could not gain on the two fugitives.

The tough and wiry redmen of the forest prided themselves on their physical powers, and could not understand how it was that the white youths were able to hold their own in a race of this kind.

They were so angered when they learned that they could not gain on the fugitives that they gave utterance to shrill and threatening yells and whoops.

"Oh, that's all right; yell all you want to!" murmured Bob.

"I wish our pistols were in working order!" thought Dick.

They continued to run with all their might.

They were glad to know that in this they were on equal terms with their enemies.

The race went on.

The Indians tried themselves to the utmost of their

abilities, but were disgusted to find that they could not gain a foot on their fleet-footed white enemies.

They could not understand it, and relieved their feelings by renewed yelling.

"If they'd save that wind they might be able to run faster," said Bob, who could not keep still all the time, no matter what the circumstances.

"I'm glad they yell, if that is the case," said Dick.

Onward they raced.

An occasional quick glance over the shoulder was sufficient to keep them posted regarding the situation.

They saw that they were holding their own, and began to feel better.

They were slowly and gradually getting in closer to the timber.

The fact that the shore of the lake bent around in a long, semi-circular curve, was favorable to the youths, as the timber followed the shore and thus it was gradually coming more in front.

Presently Dick said:

"I believe we are safe in taking to the timber now, Bob. I think we can get into it before the Indians can get close enough to fire their arrows at us."

"All right, Dick; whenever you say so we'll make the break. When you are ready say, 'now!'"

"All right, Bob."

The youths ran onward a short distance, and then Dick suddenly cried out:

"Now!"

Instantly both turned almost at right angles and darted toward the timber.

The Indians saw the move, and wild whoops went up.

They tried to increase their speed, but could not.

As they came on they fitted arrows to the bowstrings, and just as Dick and Bob reached the edge of the timber the arrows were discharged.

The arrows fell short, however.

They did not reach the youths by twenty feet, at least.

The next instant the youths were within the sheltering timber.

Of course, they were not safe yet, by any means, but Dick and Bob breathed more freely.

They felt more secure in among the trees than they had felt out in the open.

Onward they ran.

They knew the Indians would not give up the pursuit.

The redskins were perfectly at home in the forest.

It was a life and death chase yet.

Dick and Bob realized this.



They knew that if they escaped it would be only after the hardest kind of work.

But their lives were at stake and they would do their best.

Onward they dashed.

Through underbrush, across little creeks, over stones, they went.

It was an exciting, a thrilling race.

Doubtless the Indians had imagined that now that the fugitives had taken to the timber they would be able to overtake them; but, if so, they were speedily undeceived.

They found that the problem confronting them was just as difficult as ever.

The white youths seemed to understand getting through the timber and over and around obstacles quite as well as did their pursuers.

Onward the youths ran.

They were beginning to feel the effects of the wild dash for life and liberty.

They knew that their pursuers must be suffering in the same manner, however.

Even Indians were flesh and blood, and must become tired, the same as ordinary people.

The youths kept onward, with all the energy that remained to them.

They could hear the yells of their pursuers, and occasionally when giving a glance backward they caught sight of some of the Indians.

They could see that they were still holding their own, however, and this gave them courage.

They felt that it was possible that they might, unless they encountered more enemies in front, make their escape.

They felt that they must escape.

They were the bearers of important despatches to General Schuyler, and these must not be allowed to fall into the hands of the British, which would be the case if the Indians captured them, as they would be turned over to the redcoats at once, they doubted not.

They wondered where General Schuyler's force could be.

They were confident he was somewhere in the vicinity, for they had been told at Fort Edward that General Schuyler was up here, doing all he could to hold the redcoats in check.

If they could make their escape from the pursuing band of Indians the youths felt confident that they would be able to find the American officer.

So they kept up good heart and continued to run with all their might.

They kept on for half an hour.

They felt that they had run at least four miles—possibly even more than that.

The youths had run through swamps and were becoming very tired.

They felt that they could not run much longer.

The run would become a walk soon, and a slow walk at that.

Their pursuers, however, must be in the same difficulties the youths reasoned.

Then they suddenly realized that they had not heard a war-whoop or yell from the Indians for several minutes.

They looked back.

They could see nothing of any pursuers.

"Jove, Dick! I believe we have given our pursuers the slip!" exclaimed Bob.

"It does look that way," was the reply.

"So it does."

"I can't understand it, though. I would not have thought the Indians would give up. They are usually like bloodhounds in a chase of this kind."

"So they are; but for some reason they seem to have given up the pursuit."

The youths were going at a walk, now, and kept a sharp lookout behind them.

They could hardly believe that the bloodthirsty and bloodhound-like redskins had given up the pursuit.

After five minutes of walking and watching, however, without having seen or heard anything of the Indians, the youths became convinced that for some reason the redskins had given up the pursuit.

The two were very glad to know that this was the case.

They did not like the idea of being chased so much.

Still they felt that they could congratulate themselves on their success in escaping capture, as they had done, although they had been for fourteen or fifteen hours surrounded by foes, both red and white.

The youths kept onward, picking their way as best they could.

Of course, they had no idea where they were.

They hardly knew in what direction they were going.

By looking at the sun and using it as a guide, they could make out their general course, but that was all.

They judged that they were going almost due west.

Presently they got out of the swamp, through which they had been going for the past ten or fifteen minutes, and found themselves on firm ground.

This was quite a relief.

The going was much easier.

They walked onward at increased speed.

A few minutes later they reached a road.



Half a mile distant down the road the youths saw a lot of tents.

"Look, Dick!" cried Bob; "yonder are some tents. Do you suppose it is General Schuyler's force?"

"I rather think it is, Bob; I hope so, at any rate. Come, we will soon find out.

The youths hastened down the road.

As they drew near the encampment they saw some soldiers moving about.

The soldiers had on blue uniforms.

"It is Schuyler's force, Dick!" exclaimed Bob. "See, the men have on blue uniforms!"

"You are right, Bob."

The youths hastened forward.

The next moment a sentinel challenged them.

"Halt! Who comes there?"

"Friends," replied Dick.

"Advance, friends, and give the countersign."

The youths advanced to within a few yards of the sentinel.

"Halt!" the soldier ordered, leveling his musket. "Don't come any closer until you give the countersign."

"We don't know the countersign," replied Dick; "but we are friends, just the same."

"How am I to know that?"

"I suppose you will have to take our word for it; I assure you it is all right, however. We are special messengers with important despatches for General Schuyler from the commander-in-chief."

The patriot soldier looked incredulous.

"As I understand it, the commander-in-chief is away down in New Jersey," he remarked.

"You are right," nodded Dick.

"Then how can you expect me to believe your statement that you bring despatches from him when you come here afoot and from the direction of Burgoyne's army instead of from the south?"

"We had horses," replied Dick, "but had to abandon them last night, as we were attacked by Indians just after going into camp, and had all we could do to escape with our lives."

"Oh, that's it?"

The soldier's tone was dubious.

There was a look of doubt on his face, also.

Dick felt that they had lost enough time.

"Let us pass," he said; "it is all right. I have important papers which I must place in General Schuyler's hands at once. You are more apt to be reprimanded for detaining us than for letting us pass."

The sentinel still hesitated.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"My name is Dick Slater and my comrade here is——"

"What!" cried the soldier; "do you mean to say you are Dick Slater—the genuine Dick Slater of whom we have heard so much?"

"I don't know about that," replied Dick; "I am Dick Slater, and my comrade here is Bob Estabrook. We are straight from the commander-in-chief with important despatches, as I have told you. Kindly let us pass."

The sentinel lowered his musket and stepped aside.

"All right; you may enter," he said. "If you are Dick Slater it is all right."

Dick and Bob passed the sentinel and entered the camp.

They asked a soldier to direct them to the tent occupied by General Schuyler.

"General Schuyler isn't here," the soldier replied.

"He isn't?"

Dick was disappointed as well as surprised.

"No."

"Then, where is he?"

"He went with a force of men, this morning, early, to superintend the cutting down of a couple of bridges a mile or so to the northward."

"Oh, that is where he is, eh?"

"Yes; but he will likely be back soon—ah! yonder they come, now!"

The soldier pointed up the road.

A force of soldiers was seen in the distance.

"Good!" exclaimed Dick; "I am glad he is coming."

"Who are you?" the soldier asked.

Quite a little crowd had gathered about the youths, and the patriot soldiers were eying the two with curiosity, not entirely unmixed with suspicion.

Dick told them his name and that of Bob.

Exclamations of amazement escaped the soldiers.

Like the sentinel, they seemed wonder-stricken when they heard the name, Dick Slater, mentioned.

"Do you mean to say that you are the genuine Dick Slater, who has earned such a name as a scout and spy?" one of the patriots asked.

"I am Dick Slater, sure," Dick replied, "and I have done considerable work as a scout and spy under the directions of the commander-in-chief; and so has my comrade, here."

"We have heard of both of you," declared another of the soldiers; "we have heard about the company of young fellows who call themselves 'The Liberty Boys of '76.' And you are members of that company?"

"Dick, here, is the captain of the company," said Bob.

The patriot soldiers could not do enough for the youths, and when they learned that Dick and Bob had had nothing



to eat since the evening before, and then only a few bites of cold bread and meat, there was a scramble to bring out food.

The youths were soon engaged in the pleasing occupation of despatching good, wholesome food of various kinds, as the people of this part of the country were, for the most part, friendly, and the patriot soldiers had no difficulty in securing all the provisions they wished for or needed.

By the time the youths had satisfied their hunger the party of patriot soldiers was almost at the encampment.

At the head of the party rode a man of commanding presence.

He was a man well along in years, with long gray hair and a noble face.

This was General Schuyler.

As he rode up and brought his horse to a stop near where the two youths stood, the general's eyes fell upon Dick and Bob.

He looked at the youths searchingly.

"Who have we here?" he asked.

Dick advanced a few steps and, saluting, said:

"My comrade and I have just arrived, General Schuyler. We are from New Jersey, and bring despatches from the commander-in-chief."

An exclamation escaped the lips of the general.

He leaped to the ground, and, advancing, asked:

"Who are you?"

"My name is Dick Slater, sir, and my companion is Bob Estabrook."

The officer's face cleared instantly.

"I have heard of you," he said; "and now, the despatches!"

All his suspicions seemed to have disappeared as if by magic the instant Dick had told who he and Bob were.

Dick at once produced the papers from a secret pocket in his coat.

Bob produced a duplicate set.

Each handed the despatches to the general.

The papers were wrapped in waterproof cloth so the contents were not injured, even though, as will be remembered, Dick and Bob had spent considerable time in the water the night before.

The general, as soon as he had received the despatches, went to his tent, and nothing more was seen of him for half an hour.

Then an orderly came to Dick and Bob and told them the officer wished to see them in his tent.

The youths hastened to the tent.

General Schuyler was very pleasant, and shook hands with them.

"I was so eager to read the despatches that I am afraid I was not so courteous or considerate as I should have been," he said, half apologetically.

"Oh, that is all right, sir," said Dick.

Then the general began asking the youths questions.

He asked them many questions regarding the situation down in New Jersey, and then he asked them regarding their own experiences in reaching his encampment.

"I understand you had some adventures with the enemy last night," he said.

The youths nodded.

Then Dick told the story of their experience of the night and morning as briefly and simply as possible.

General Schuyler was an old campaigner, however, and he easily read between the lines.

He realized that these two modest youths were heroes indeed.

He knew that in making their escape from the foes which had surrounded them, they had done something which he would not have believed it possible any one could do.

"Why, you were in the very midst of our foes, both red and white!" the general exclaimed. "They have been holding forth in the vicinity of that little lake for three days, now, and are as thick around there as flies in summer-time."

"They are certainly thick enough around there," agreed Dick.

"I should say so; and I don't see how you managed to make your escape. You were very fortunate, indeed."

"I think so, myself, sir," agreed Dick.

The general then asked the youths if they would remain with his army a while, or whether they would start on their return to New Jersey.

"We can't start, now," replied Dick; "the redskins captured our horses and we can't go till we get our animals back."

"I am sorry to say that we have but the one horse here—the one you saw me riding," the general said; "if we had the horses you should have them, but we haven't them."

"That is all right," said Dick; "we are in no particular hurry, and will remain here and wait till we can get our own horses back from the enemy."

General Schuyler smiled, dubiously.

"I'm afraid you will have to remain here a long time if you wait till you can recover your own animals," he said.

"I don't know," said Dick; "I think we can get them."

"You do?"

The general evidently thought the idea was a foolish one to entertain.



"Yes, sir."

General Schuyler shook his head.

"I don't think it possible that you can succeed in such an undertaking," he said; "if you attempt it you will undoubtedly lose your lives."

But Dick and Bob did not think so.

"We went through with some pretty lively experiences last night and this morning, and did not lose our lives," said Dick; "I rather think we will be able to get our horses back from the enemy. We will give it a trial, anyway."

"When?"

"To-night."

"Well, be very careful, however. I should feel very bad if harm should come to you while here with me. I am aware of the fact that the commander-in-chief sets considerable store by you two young men."

"Oh, if anything should happen to us he would not blame you, General Schuyler," said Dick; "he knows us, and knows that we alone will be to blame if anything happens to us."

After some further talk the youths withdrew, the general telling them to make themselves entirely at home.

The youths did so, and were soon acquainted with a great many of the patriot soldiers.

All seemed desirous of making Dick's and Bob's acquaintance, so the time did not hang heavily on the youths' hands at all.

Shortly after noon a scout came in and reported to General Schuyler that the redcoats and Indians had succeeded in getting across the two streams where the bridges had been cut by the patriots, and were advancing up the road.

"They will reach this point by evening," the scout said.

As General Schuyler's force was entirely inadequate to the task of holding the redcoats and their red allies back by force of arms, the general, like the careful man that he was, gave the order to break camp and retire.

"All that I can do," he said to Dick and Bob, "is to retard the progress of the British as much as possible. I cut the bridges, obstruct the streams where boats might be used by the enemy, and fell trees across the roads. That is all I can do; I am not strong enough to offer battle."

The general sent a large force up the road, with instructions to cut as many large trees, and lay them across the road, as was possible.

Dick and Bob told General Schuyler that they would remain in the vicinity of the point where the patriot camp had been, and where it was probable that the British and Indians would camp for the night.

"We will hang around in this neighborhood," said Dick,

"and it is possible that we may get a chance to get our horses away from the enemy."

General Schuyler was reluctant to see them do this, but he considered that he had no right to order the youths not to do so, so he made the best of it and told them to exercise all possible caution.

"Don't take a single unnecessary chance," he cautioned; "remember, it will be much better to let the British keep the horses than to lose your lives trying to recover the animals."

"We will be very careful," Dick assured him.

Then the youths laid in a good supply of food, and retiring half a mile back in the timber, waited.

They had made up their minds to have their horses back.

The thought of going away and leaving their animals in the possession of the British was extremely distasteful to the youths.

They would not do it unless it proved to be an utter impossibility to recover the horses.

They hunted up a nice quiet spot, and made themselves as comfortable as possible.

They found a place on the bank of a little creek.

Just back of them was a rocky ledge a dozen feet in height.

They were sheltered from the sun by the thick foliage of some large trees, and throwing themselves down they talked of first one thing, then another for a couple of hours.

Then Dick got up and made a little scouting expedition.

He could see no signs of redcoats or Indians, and returned, and, throwing himself down, again entered into conversation with Bob.

About six o'clock they got out some food and ate heartily, finishing by taking a good drink out of the creek.

They felt better, now, and were ready for work.

They felt that they would be able to recover their horses from their enemies, the redcoats and Indians.

They were determined to make the effort, anyway.

Feeling slightly lazy, after their meal, they lay on their back, with their heads toward the ledge, and looked up at the sky and became silent.

Suddenly, as Dick gazed upward, he saw the ugly, painted face of a redskin sticking out over the edge of the ledge, a dozen feet above where the youths lay!

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE BURNING CABIN.

A cold chill went over Dick.

He saw that the beady eyes of the savage were fixed upon him.



It happened that Dick's eyes were partially closed, and he felt certain that the Indian thought him asleep.

Bob's eyes were shut.

He had not seen the Indian and had no knowledge of his presence.

Dick's mind worked rapidly.

What should he do?

Feeling sure that the Indian thought him asleep, Dick did the best thing that he could have done, perhaps:

He lay perfectly still.

The Indian gazed downward with eager eyes.

It was evident that he was deceived.

He thought the youths were asleep, undoubtedly, and Dick was relieved to note that the redskin made no move toward encompassing the death of himself and Bob.

Dick thought he knew why this was.

Doubtless the Indians had received instructions to capture the two strange youths, if possible, and bring them before General Burgoyne.

Suddenly the hideous, painted face was withdrawn from Dick's sight.

Dick listened with all his might, so to speak.

He heard a faint, rustling for a few moments, and then the noise ceased.

"He is going to get some of his companions to come and help him capture us," thought Dick.

He turned his face toward his companion.

"Bob!" he whispered.

Bob, astonished by being addressed in a whisper, but warned by the fact that something unusual was in the wind, opened his eyes and looked inquiringly at Dick.

"What is it?" he asked, also speaking in a whisper.

"We must get away from here, and in a hurry, too! I just saw an Indian looking down at us from the top of the ledge."

"Great guns! Do you think it is safe to go, now?"

"I guess so, if we are cautious. Up and away, and be careful not to make any noise."

The youths rose to their feet and stole away.

They moved up the stream.

As they went they kept a sharp lookout around them.

They did not wish to be caught napping.

They drew their pistols and held them, ready cocked, in their hands. They were determined to make a good fight if the redskins put in an appearance.

The youths had gone a distance of a hundred yards, when they heard a wild yell of anger and disappointment.

"The Indians have discovered our escape!" said Dick. "Now we must run, Bob!"

And run they did.

They had had so much experience during the night before, and that morning, that it was like old times over again; but it cannot be said that the youths enjoyed the prospects of being chased for a mile or two by the blood-thirsty redskins.

Still, as there was no help for it, they made the best of the situation and ran at the top of their speed.

They wished to get clear away from the Indians, as this was necessary if they were to make any headway toward regaining their horses, for it would be impossible for them to reconnoitre the encampment of the British while being chased by the redskins.

So they exerted themselves to an unusual degree, and ran at a greater speed than they thought possible they could do.

They heard yells behind them for a while, but were pleased to note that the yells grew gradually but surely fainter and fainter.

"We are leaving them behind, Dick," said Bob.

"I think you are right, Bob," Dick replied.

"I'm mighty glad of it. Do you know, old man, I'm getting tired of being chased by those painted demons?"

"So am I."

The youths continued onward till they could no longer hear any yells at all, and then they came to a stop.

The sun had gone down, and it would soon be dark, so they decided that they had gone far enough.

If the Indians should come they would be able to dodge the red fiends in the darkness.

They took up their position in the midst of a clump of bushes and waited.

They remained there for nearly an hour and the Indians had not put in an appearance.

"I guess they gave up the chase as a bad job," said Bob, finally.

"I judge so, Bob. Well, shall we move?"

"I am ready whenever you are, Dick."

The youths at once set out through the timber.

They were sure they knew the general direction they ought to go to reach the encampment of the British.

They proceeded at a moderate pace.

There was no hurry.

This was a case where it would be best to make haste slowly.

They moved carefully along.

They did not know but they might happen upon some Indians at any moment.

That was one advantage about fighting against the redskins.



They were always prowling around, through the timber, while the redcoats seldom left the camp.

Dick and Bob moved along for nearly half an hour.

Suddenly they heard the sound of whooping over toward the left.

The noise was evidently made by Indians.

The youths paused and listened.

The yelling could be plainly heard, which proved that the Indians were not far away.

"I wonder what is going on over there?" remarked Bob.

"I don't know," was the reply; "supposing we investigate?"

"I'm willing."

The two turned aside and went in the direction from which the yelling came.

They went scarcely a quarter of a mile when they reached the edge of a little clearing.

At the farther side of the clearing was a log cabin.

The cabin was on fire—was burning briskly, and dancing around it were fifteen to twenty Indians.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE YOUTHS REGAIN THEIR HORSES.

Dick and Bob stood and gazed upon the scene.

They wondered if there was any one in the cabin.

As they were asking themselves this question, they received an answer.

There was the report of a rifle, and one of the dancing Indians threw up his arms and fell to the ground with a wild death-yell.

Instantly the redskins gave utterance to a series of blood-curdling whoops and discharged a flight of arrows at the cabin.

Of course, the arrows did no harm, but the act of firing the feathered missiles relieved the Indians' feelings, doubtless.

Then they retired till well out of the light thrown out by the burning cabin.

They did not stop whooping, however.

Doubtless they thought their yells would induce a feeling of terror in the breast of the person in the cabin.

Dick and Bob hardly knew what to do.

They felt that whoever was in the cabin was in great danger, and like the brave youths that they were, they wished to assist the imperiled one, but they could not think what it was best to do.

They were outnumbered so greatly by the red fiends that it would be extremely dangerous to attack them.

What, then, should they do?

They studied the matter over, even as they watched the fire eating its way into the logs of the cabin.

It was evident that the cabin was doomed.

The logs were dry, and the fire was already beyond control, even if the owner had been free to try to save it.

Suddenly there came another sharp, whip-like crack, and another Indian gave utterance to a wild yell of pain and fell.

The man in the cabin was undoubtedly a good marksman.

Again the Indians gave utterance to wild yells.

And again they drew back farther into the darkness.

They were now closer to Dick and Bob than to the cabin.

Then suddenly the door of the cabin was opened and a man leaped out and darted around the end of the cabin.

The Indians saw the fugitive, and darted forward, with fierce yells, at the same time fitting arrows to the bow-strings.

They were not so far away but what they would be able to hit the fugitive.

Dick and Bob realized this, and being anxious to render the man assistance, they whipped out their pistols and fired upon the redskins.

They fired the two shots and then whipping out their other two pistols, fired two more shots, at the same time giving utterance to as loud yells as they could.

This attack from the rear disconcerted the Indians to such an extent that they failed to fire the arrows, and the fugitive got around the corner of the cabin and out of sight, in safety.

The youths realized that they would have to get away from that neighborhood in a hurry if they would save their scalps.

The Indians had paused, and some had turned toward the point from which the pistol shots had come.

While the Indians stood, hesitating, seemingly undecided whether to follow the owner of the cabin or to give their attention to the ones who had attacked them from the rear, Dick and Bob turned and hastened away through the timber.

Then the Indians suddenly came to a decision and they divided their force, part going in pursuit of the owner of the cabin, the rest coming in pursuit of Dick and Bob.

Again the youths were forced to run for their lives.

Fortunately they were amply able to hold their own in a game of this kind.

They gradually bent around to the left in an attempt to



go in the direction in which they thought the British encampment lay.

The youths kept going in a circling direction, and after running for perhaps fifteen minutes they heard a sound of pattering feet behind them.

They paused and heard the footsteps coming closer.

They could tell by the sound that there was only one person.

"Perhaps it is the man who was in the cabin," suggested Bob.

Dick thought this likely.

They waited till the newcomer was within three or four yards of them and then Dick called out:

"Who is there?"

Instantly the sound of running feet stopped.

The youths heard an exclamation in the American tongue.

This proved that the newcomer was a white man.

"Who are you?" came back.

"A couple of white men," replied Dick; "are you the man who escaped from the burning cabin?"

"Yes," was the reply in an eager tone; "are you the men who assisted my escape by opening fire on the redskins from the rear?"

"Yes; what has become of your pursuers? Have you given them the slip?"

"I think so; and you?"

"We have gotten away from our pursuers, I think."

"That is good."

The stranger approached and stood close to the youths.

The three could see one another faintly.

"Who are you two, if I may ask?" inquired the man.

"Surely you are not redcoats, or you would not have fired upon the Indians."

"No," replied Dick; "we are not redcoats."

"Ah! I think I can guess who you are," the man said;

"you are from the patriot army under General Schuyler!"

"You are right," agreed Dick. "And who are you?"

"I am a settler—a hunter, trapper and farmer, and my home is the cabin which you saw burning. My name is Seth Larkins."

"We are glad to know you," said Dick; "my name is Dick Slater, and that of my comrade, Bob Estabrook."

The three shook hands.

Then they stood still for a few moments and listened intently.

They could hear nothing to indicate the presence of Indians anywhere in the neighborhood.

"I guess we have gotten clear away from the red fiends," said Larkins.

"It would seem so," agreed Dick.

"Is there anything I can do to aid you two?" asked the man. "I owe you something for coming to my assistance, back yonder, and am eager to repay you."

"There is nothing, I guess," replied Dick.

"May I ask why you are here in the vicinity of the camp of the British?"

"Certainly; some of those Indians got our horses away from us yesterday evening, and we are here for the purpose of trying to get the animals back."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yes."

"It will be a dangerous thing to try to do."

"We are aware of that," replied Dick; "but we must have our horses, danger or no danger."

"Well, if there is anything that I can do, I shall be only too glad to do it."

"I guess there is nothing; what we do will have to be done by stealth, not by force, and one more would not be a help. In fact, the fewer there are of us the more apt we are to succeed."

"Yes, that is true. Well, you have my best wishes for your success."

"Thank you," replied Dick.

After a little further conversation, Dick and Bob shook hands with Larkins and parted from him.

The youths made their way in the direction of the British encampment, while Larkins started back in the direction of his home.

The youths walked onward for perhaps fifteen minutes, and then they caught sight of camp-fires in the distance.

They were close upon the British encampment.

"We will have to be very careful, now, Bob," whispered Dick.

"So we will."

The youths stole forward until they came to a point from which they had a good view of the British encampment.

They paused and gazed upon the scene with interest.

They wondered where their horses were likely to be.

There was only one way to find out.

This was by making search.

The youths decided to make a complete circuit of the camp.

They knew that the horses would be found somewhere on the outskirts of the encampment.

They at once started out to put their plan into effect.

They moved away among the trees.

Their course was a gradual circle, the youths keeping



about the same distance from the encampment during the whole of the time.

They had made perhaps one-fourth of the circuit when they discovered the horses.

There were, all told, perhaps a dozen of the animals.

Two of them were, of course, Dick's and Bob's horses.

The others were the animals ridden by the British officers.

Dick and Bob came to a stop and made a survey of the situation.

Before attempting to do anything they must lay out their plans of procedure.

The youths soon discovered that there was a sentinel on guard over the horses.

Evidently the first thing to do was to get this sentinel out of the way.

To try to get their horses while the sentinel stood guard, would be folly.

Of course, it would be dangerous work getting the sentinel out of the way, but it would not be as dangerous as to try to get the horses out from under his nose.

The youths crept around and took up their position a few yards in the rear of the sentinel.

Dick took upon himself the task of handling the sentinel.

It would be necessary to steal up close in order to handle the redcoat without giving him a chance to give the alarm, and one could do this better than two.

Dick stole softly forward.

His feet made no noise whatever.

The youth was an expert in woodcraft.

The Indians who were with Burgoyne could not have given the youth any pointers in this respect.

Forward the youth stole.

Closer and closer he crept.

Had the sentinel been attending strictly to business, Dick's task would have been more difficult.

The redcoat should have had his back to the encampment and his face toward Dick; but instead, he had his face toward the encampment and his back toward the youth.

The sentinel was watching his comrades who were seated about the camp-fires, laughing, talking, playing cards and enjoying themselves, and doubtless he was wishing that he was with them.

Closer and closer Dick crept.

Presently he was within two yards of the sentinel.

Dick paused and measured the distance intervening between himself and his intended victim.

Having sized up the distance satisfactorily, Dick crouched for the leap which he intended making.

At this instant a man rose from his position near one of the camp-fires and came walking rapidly toward the sentinel on guard over the horses.

Dick saw the man coming and knew that it was the officer of the guard starting to make his rounds to see if the sentinels were attending to business.

The youth realized that the sentinel, not wishing to be caught with his face toward the encampment, would turn, and as this realization came to Dick he stepped behind a tree which stood near at hand.

He was not an instant too soon.

The sentinel saw the officer of the guard coming, and whirled quickly.

Had he been an instant quicker he could not have helped seeing Dick; but, as it was, he just missed doing so.

The officer of the guard approached and addressed the sentinel.

"How is everything, Johnson?" he asked.

"All is well, sergeant," was the reply.

"No signs of any rebels skulking about, eh?"

"No, sir."

"Very good; keep your eyes open. Some Indians just came in with the news that they had seen and chased those two young fellows who gave us so much trouble last night and this morning. They are certainly bold rascals and may try to spy upon us."

"If they come fooling around here I'll give them a reception that they won't like!" declared the sentinel.

"That's the way to talk, Johnson. If you catch sight of anybody, don't hesitate to shoot."

"You may be sure I won't hesitate, sir."

The officer of the guard passed onward, leaving the sentinel with his face turned in Dick's direction.

This placed the youth in an unpleasant predicament.

He could not hope to leap out and throttle the sentinel before the fellow could give an alarm.

Neither could he hope to beat a retreat without being discovered.

He was within six feet of the sentinel, and if he were to move he would certainly attract the sentinel's attention.

For once Dick did not know what to do.

So long as he remained standing quietly, behind the tree, he was comparatively safe; but he had no wish to remain there.

He wished to be doing something.

He thought of Bob, and wondered if his comrade would be able to think of some plan to assist him.

Dick felt sure that if any one could think of something to do, under the circumstances, Bob was the fellow to do it.

Bob was hot-headed and impetuous, as a rule, but was



cunning and resourceful, also, and could be as careful and cautious as any one, if the necessity arose.

Dick turned his head and looked in the direction of where he had left Bob, but could see nothing of his comrade.

Dick stood there for perhaps five minutes, pondering the situation and trying to think what it would be best to do.

Presently Dick heard a rustling sound over toward the left hand.

Dick judged that the sentinel must have heard it, also. He could not well help hearing it as the rustling sound was quite distinct.

A sudden thought came to Dick.

Was it not possible that Bob was making the noise with a view to attracting the sentinel's attention away from the point where Dick was hiding?

Dick thought that it was extremely probable that this was the case.

The youth peered cautiously around the tree.

He could see that the sentinel's head was turned and that the fellow was looking in the direction from which the rustling sound came.

The rustling came even louder and more pronounced, and the sentinel faced in that direction and raised his musket to his shoulder.

Fearing that the sentinel would challenge and thus attract the attention of the soldiers around the camp-fires, Dick decided to act.

Stepping quickly out from behind the tree on the side that would bring him farther around behind the redcoat, Dick suddenly leaped forward.

He seized the sentinel by the throat with both hands and exerting all his strength, jerked the fellow to the ground.

The redcoat, taken entirely by surprise, had let go of the musket and grasped Dick's hands in an effort to tear them loose from his throat.

At the same time he tried to cry out.

He could do neither.

He could only utter a faint, gasping gurgle.

He could not loosen Dick's grip a particle.

The youth's fingers were like bands of steel.

The redcoat began kicking and thrashing about in the hope, doubtless, that he might thus attract the attention of his comrades seated about the camp-fires.

He might have succeeded if he had been allowed to keep this up.

This was not to be, however.

Bob suddenly put in an appearance and promptly sat

down upon the redcoat's legs, making it impossible for the fellow to do any more kicking about.

Dick, seated astride the redcoat's body, held him firmly.

The redcoat was helpless.

He could neither move nor cry out.

Dick compressed the fellow's wind-pipe, tightly.

The sentinel could not get his breath, and two minutes later he relapsed into unconsciousness.

Dick waited till he was sure the fellow was senseless, and then he let go his hold and rose to his feet.

Bob did likewise.

"Come!" whispered Dick; "we must get our horses and get away from here."

They stole in among the horses which were tied in a semi-circle.

They had no trouble in finding their own animals.

Untying the two horses the youths led them back into the timber a distance of fifty yards, and tied them to trees.

Then the two hastened back and secured the bridles and saddles.

These they carried to where the horse had been left.

They quickly saddled and bridled the animals.

Just as they finished doing so they heard the sounds of a terrible commotion in the British encampment.

"They have found the sentinel and discovered that two of the horses are missing!" exclaimed Dick. "We will have to get away from here in a hurry!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A BOLD DASH.

"So we will," agreed Bob; "you lead the way, I'll follow."

"All right; come along."

Dick considered it folly to mount the horses while yet among the trees.

They must make an effort to reach the road.

Should they succeed in doing this, then they could mount and have some chance for making their escape.

Dick moved away through the timber as rapidly as possible, leading the horse.

Bob followed closely.

Dick started in a direction which would have taken them around to the south side of the British encampment, but had gone but a short distance when he heard voices in front.

It would not do to go on.



They would surely be captured if they did.

Dick realized this.

He stopped and turned squarely around.

"They have headed us off, Bob!" he whispered. "We will have to go in the other direction."

"Go ahead, Dick; I'll follow you."

Dick made his way in the opposite direction of that in which he had just been going.

Their way was not disputed this time, and Dick continued onward.

Bob kept close behind, and the two after circling one-fourth of the way around the British encampment, came into the road.

They were on the north side of the encampment, however, which made their position anything but a satisfactory one.

Of course, Dick and Bob wished to reach the patriot encampment which lay four or five miles to the southward.

To do this they would have to get past the British encampment.

That this would be a difficult matter, they were well aware.

They knew that the entire encampment was aroused.

Redcoats and Indians were scouring the woods to the eastward and westward, and, without doubt, were patrolling the road to the southward.

They had not yet come up the road leading toward the north, but might do so later.

Their reason for not having done so was because of the fact that they supposed the fugitives would try to go toward the south in the direction of the patriot encampment.

Not desiring to remain in such close proximity to the camp, Dick and Bob mounted their horses and heading toward the north rode nearly a mile in that direction.

Here they stopped for the purpose of holding a council.

"What shall we do, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I hardly know," was the reply.

"Do you suppose we can get around and past the British encampment?"

"I don't think it will be safe to try it right away, Bob. Later on we might be able to accomplish it."

"You mean some time to-night?"

"Yes—or, rather, some time toward morning."

"I see."

The youths were talking in cautious tones, for they feared they might be overheard by Indian scouts, when they heard sounds as of somebody coming up the road.

"I think it is a scouting party of Indians," said Dick; "we must get farther back."

They rode on northward another mile.

Here they paused and again talked and listened, alternately, for another half hour or so.

Then, hearing no sounds, they decided that they were far enough away to be safe, and dismounted and leading their horses to one side of the road, tied them to trees.

Then the youths sat down in the middle of the road and talked the situation over and listened for sounds of the enemy.

One, two hours passed and neither redcoats nor Indians had put in an appearance.

The youths decided that it must be getting well along toward midnight.

In this they were not far wrong.

It was half-past eleven.

They were in no hurry, however, and decided to wait a while longer.

When another hour had passed the youths untied their horses, mounted, and rode away toward the south.

They rode at a moderate gait, for they did not know but they might encounter some of the Indians or redcoats at any moment.

They were half an hour riding the two miles to the British camp.

They paused a quarter of a mile to the northward of the camp.

What should they do?

Should they ride aside into the timber and make a big circuit and come out into the road again on the south side of the camp?

Suddenly Bob suggested a startling plan.

"Everybody in the British camp, except the sentinels, are asleep, don't you think, Dick?" Bob asked.

"I judge so, Bob," was the reply.

"Well, then, why not make a sudden dash and ride right through the encampment?"

The boldness of this plan almost dazed Dick for the moment.

He hardly knew what to think.

He was silent for a few moments.

The more he thought of the plan, the better he liked it and the more he thought there was a good chance that it might prove successful.

The very boldness of the plan was in its favor, Dick thought.

He reasoned that it was possible, even probable, that the British had parties of their Indian allies scouting through the timber on both sides of the road.

This being the case, Bob's plan was the safest one that could be thought of.



The redcoats certainly would not be expecting such bold action and would not be prepared for it.

The youths talked the matter over and discussed the plan from all standpoints.

The result was that they decided to make the dash.

Having decided, there was no need of further delay.

They waited only long enough to see that their pistols were in a handy position where they could be seized quickly if the necessity arose.

As soon as they were ready the youths rode forward.

They urged their horses to a gallop and then to a run.

Straight toward the encampment they dashed.

The horses' hoofs made a terrible clatter, the youths thought.

At least, it sounded that way to them.

But they did not hesitate nor slacken their speed.

Indeed, they urged their horses to still greater speed.

The youths had made up their minds to ride straight through the British encampment and they would do it or die trying.

Onward they dashed.

They had almost reached the northern edge of the encampment when a loud voice called out:

"Halt!"

But the youths did not halt.

They kept right on with undiminished speed.

Again the sentinel cried, "Halt!" but seemingly comprehending that the horsemen would not halt, he fired off his musket.

The bullet whistled past Dick's ear, but did no damage.

The report of the musket came much nearer, being more harmful than was the case with the bullet, for it awoke the majority of the sleeping redcoats and Indians.

They leaped to their feet and stared wildly about them.

The camp-fires had burned low, but they threw out some light and the redcoats and Indians were enabled to make out two horsemen dashing recklessly through the encampment.

Being so suddenly aroused from their slumbers, neither redcoats nor Indians were able to at once grasp the situation.

Who were the two horsemen galloping so recklessly through the camp?

This was the question which each and every one asked themselves.

Suddenly a cry burst upon the night air.

It came from the sentinel at the north side of the encampment.

He, being awake and in full possession of his faculties when the youths first put in an appearance, was enabled

to arrive at an understanding of the situation quicker than his comrades who had just been aroused from their slumber.

"The rebels!" he cried. "They are the rebel spies! Shoot them! Don't let them escape!"

The voice and words of their comrade roused the redcoats to action.

They leaped up and seized their muskets.

Dick and Bob were now fully halfway across the patch of ground covered by the tents of the British, and every leap of the horses carried them closer to the south side of the encampment and safety.

Were they going to succeed in getting through in safety? the youths asked themselves.

They hoped so.

They saw the redcoats leap up and seize their muskets, however, and realized that they would have to undergo the ordeal of a volley or two, at any rate.

They set their teeth, leaned forward almost on their horses' necks and urged the animals forward.

They were now almost through the encampment.

In the middle of the road, at the south side of the encampment, stood another sentinel.

Dick saw the fellow level his musket and take deliberate aim.

The youth was not afraid for himself so much as he was that the horse might be hit.

If the sentinel should succeed in bringing down either of the horses, the rider, if he escaped a broken neck, would most certainly be captured.

Realizing this, Dick was determined that the sentinel should not be allowed to fire at his leisure.

Quick as a flash Dick drew a pistol.

The drawing of the pistol and leveling it was all done with one motion.

The instant the pistol came to a level, Dick pulled the trigger.

Crack!

It was a snap-shot, but a wonderfully true one.

The bullet struck the sentinel in the shoulder and so disconcerted his aim that, although he fired, the bullet went twenty feet to one side of the youths.

The wounded redcoat had barely time to leap out of the way of the horses.

Had he been an instant later he would have been trampled underneath the flying feet of the horses.

At the same instant the rattle of firearms broke upon the night air.

The redcoats had fired a volley.

More properly speaking, perhaps, the redcoats had begun



and were keeping up an irregular fusilade, for no great number of them were ready to fire at the same instant.

The youths heard the zip, zip of a number of bullets, some of which came unpleasantly near, but none of which, luckily, struck either of the youths or their horses.

Onward they dashed.

The youths were bent forward on the necks of the horses and as much over to the side away from the redcoats, who were firing as fast as was possible.

The bullets still continued to zip! past, but the "Liberty Boys'" good luck was in the ascendant, and they were not hurt.

Half a dozen of the redcoats rushed to where the horses were, and, untying them, led them to the road, leaped on the animals' backs and came dashing down the road in pursuit.

The redcoats chased Dick and Bob about two miles, and then finding that they could not gain any on the fugitives—indeed, they were slowly but surely losing ground—they gave the chase up and turned back.

The wonderful feat of the two "rebels" was the subject for considerable talk in the British encampment that night and next morning, as may well be supposed.

Dick and Bob, as soon as they saw that the redcoats had given up the pursuit, slackened the speed of their horses and allowed them to take it easy for a mile or so.

Then the animals were urged to a gallop, and fifteen minutes later the youths were challenged:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

It was the patriot sentinel.

"Friends," replied Dick, as they reined up their horses.

"Advance, friends, and give the countersign."

The youths had the countersign and obeyed.

They were allowed to enter the patriot encampment, and half an hour later were lying wrapped in their blankets and sound asleep.

Next morning, as soon as breakfast had been eaten, Dick went to General Schuyler and told him that they had succeeded in getting their horses.

"I guess we will start on our return to New Jersey, this morning," he said; "that is, unless you wish us to remain longer."

"No," said the general, "there is no need for you to stay. Come here one hour from now and I will have a letter ready for you to take to the commander-in-chief."

"Very well, sir."

Dick saluted and withdrew.

He and Bob put in the hour getting ready for their journey.

They rubbed their horses down, bridled and saddled

them and then looked to their pistols and saw that they were loaded and primed.

When the hour was up, Dick and Bob went to General Schuyler's tent, and after receiving the letter and putting it safely in his pocket, Dick bade the old general good-by.

Bob did the same, and then, saluting, they withdrew.

They lost no time in getting started.

They mounted, and with a good-by to the soldiers, who were gathered to see them off, they rode away toward the south.

As they left the encampment, the patriot soldiers gave them a rousing cheer.

The youths half turned in their saddles, and taking off their hats, waved them in reply.

Then they galloped around a bend in the road and disappeared from the sight of their friends.

This was the first time that any of the soldiers of the North, under General Schuyler, had seen Dick and Bob, but they had taken a great liking to the brave "Liberty Boys."

As for the youths, they felt very well satisfied with their trip, as a whole.

True, they had had some lively adventures.

They had been surrounded by foes, with seemingly no chance of escape, had been in great danger, but they had managed to escape and were happy.

They had carried the despatches to General Schuyler, safely, in spite of redcoats and Indians, and would have a good report to make to the commander-in-chief when they should reach New Jersey.

And they had had the exquisite pleasure of seeing and being with their sweethearts, sweet Alice Estabrook and Edith Slater.

That they managed it so as to be enabled to spend a night at their homes on the return trip goes without saying.

## THE END.

The next number (54) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' FLIGHT; OR, A VERY NARROW ESCAPE," by Harry Moore.

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